

SPEECH

OF

HON. EDSON B. OLDS, OF OHIO,

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, MONDAY, AUGUST 5, 1850.

in reply to a speech of Mr. CAMPBELL, delivered in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union.

Mr. OLDS said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I much regret the attack of my colleague upon me this morning, for the reason that my health is such that I feel physically unable to reply; and for the still further reason, that both his remarks and my own are utterly foreign to the bill under consideration. I trust, however, that inasmuch as I have so seldom troubled the committee with any remarks during this tedious session of Congress, I shall be readily pardoned for occupying the brief hour allotted to me, in correcting the misrepresentations of my colleague.

Mr. Chairman, my colleague commenced his attack by remarking that my position was considered doubtful on the Wilmot proviso. I am not in the habit, sir, of being misunderstood in any position that I assume, and I am utterly at a loss to know from what source my colleague derives any information susceptible of such doubtful construction. I have never supposed, sir, that in order to establish my opposition to slavery extension, it is necessary to wear any external Wilmot-proviso badge. Some men, sir, desire to be judged by their professions. Such, perhaps, is the wish of my colleague. But I have been taught to judge men rather by their actions than their professions. I will say to my colleague, in the language of one of our old men, "show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works." Three or four times, sir, whilst representing a portion of my present constituents in the Legislature of Ohio, I recorded my vote against slavery extension. Whilst canvassing my district for the seat which I have the honor to occupy in this House, everywhere I told my constituents that, although I regarded the doctrine of non-intervention as the most effectual means of excluding slavery from territory now free, yet if called upon to vote for or against a resolution excluding slavery from all the free territory of the United States, I should, in a declaration of sentiment, vote for such a resolution. Can my colleague point to any vote of mine, upon this question, given during this session of Congress, that admits of a doubtful construction? Can he point to any word of mine, spoken, in debate or elsewhere, inconsistent with my former actions and present professions upon this question? Sir, if he cannot, let him at once withdraw the charge as unauthorized and untrue.

Mr. CAMPBELL. I have heard the course of my colleague represented as doubtful upon this question. I made the allusion in order to give him an opportunity of placing himself right.

Mr. OLDS. I thank my colleague, certainly, for his jealous care of my consistency and reputation. Perhaps, however, before I am done with

him, he will find true the old adage, "that people who weed well their own gardens, will have enough to do, without weeding their neighbors'."

Mr. Chairman, if my colleague's remarks had been wholly personal to myself, I should have permitted them to pass unnoticed, and as unworthy the attention of this committee. But he has attempted through me to make wholesale charges against the whole Democratic party. My colleague charges me with having said, "that the Democratic party had always opposed a protective tariff, a bank of the United States, and all the other leading measures of the Whig party;" and in consequence, he has labored one full hour, in order to convince this committee that the Democratic party has been a party of inconsistencies, and upon both sides of all political questions.

This, Mr. Chairman, is a gross misrepresentation of what I said; and if my colleague will turn to my printed speech, he will find that he has utterly misapprehended the tenor of my remarks.

For the benefit of my colleague, I will read from that speech as published in the Globe:

"I look with pride, Mr. Chairman, upon the past history and the measures of the Democratic party. If you trace the history of that party, you will find that all its measures of distinctive policy, after having been established, have proved highly beneficial to the country.

"I assume the position, that the Democratic party are opposed to a high protective tariff, and that in that position they have been sustained by the people. Will my colleague deny it? I assume the position, that the Democratic party took ground against the Bank of the United States, and that in that position they have been sustained by the people, until, in the language of Daniel Webster, a Bank of the United States has become an 'obsolete idea.' Will my colleague deny it? I assume the position, that the Democratic party are opposed to the distribution of the proceeds of the sales of the public lands, and that in this position they have been sustained by the people. Will my colleague deny it? I assume the position, that in every great measure of policy advocated by the Democratic party, they have been sustained by the people. Will my colleague deny it?"

Does this language, sir, convey the idea that the Democratic party, as a party, always opposed a protective tariff or a national bank? Not at all: and for the benefit of my colleague, I am free to admit, that in the inception of these measures they were not regarded exclusively as Whig policy. It was not until their operations upon the different classes in community began to develop themselves, that they assumed the character of party measures. It was not until they were found to operate for the protection of a few capitalists, at the expense of the toiling millions, that they became the distinctive policy of the Whig party. My colleague need not, therefore, suppose that he involves either myself or the democratic party in inconsistencies, by reference to the votes upon the tariff of 1789. I am not indebted to the vast researches of my colleague for the information, that the preamble to

the tariff act of 1789 assumes that it was for protection as well as revenue. Very probably, sir, the preamble of the tariff acts of 1816 and 1824, may assert the same doctrine. All this would not involve the Democratic party in any inconsistency, though they might have voted for these acts. Why, sir, if the tariffs of 1789, 1816, and 1824, were protective tariffs, so is the tariff of 1846, for it levies higher duties than either of the tariffs referred to. If in 1789, eleven per cent. ad valorem was considered protective, my colleague is welcome to a protective tariff. The Democratic party have increased that protection to some thirty per cent., and yet all that will not satisfy the insatiate maw of manufacturing capitalists, and Whig politicians.

Sir, before my colleague charges inconsistency upon the Democratic party, he should show that the protective tariff of 1789 was such a tariff as the Democracy oppose, and not base his accusation upon the word "protection" in the preamble. Now, sir, the tariff of 1789, was an ad valorem tariff: such is still the Democratic theory. The tariff of 1789 had no specific duties: such is still the Democratic doctrine. The tariff of 1789 was a tariff for revenue and incidentally protective: such are now the principles contended for by the Democratic party. It imposed a duty of eleven per cent. ad valorem upon all such imported goods as conflicted with the interest of the manufacturers in the United States. It was called a "protective tariff," because it was then held that a duty of eleven per cent. was a sufficient protection to our own manufacturers.

Mr. Chairman, suppose the Democratic party, for the sake of consistency, should now pass a tariff act, and the preamble should say, "Whereas it is necessary for the raising of revenue and the protection of American manufactures, that a duty should be imposed upon all imported goods: Therefore, be it enacted, &c., that a duty of eleven per cent. ad valorem be levied upon all goods imported into the United States," &c.,—would this satisfy my colleague and the Whig party, and relieve the Democracy from the charge of inconsistency? Why, sir, the Democracy, as I have already shown, have given you a tariff of thirty per cent. ad valorem; they have raised on the eleven per cent. protection, of 1789, to a protection of thirty per cent. in 1846.

It was not until the effects of the tariff of 1828, —a tariff which changed every principle of the tariff of 1789; a tariff of specific and discriminating duties, more than equal, in many instances, to a hundred per cent. ad valorem—began to develop themselves, that the Democratic party took ground against a high protective tariff. Then it was that party lines were drawn upon this question; then it was that the Democratic party, in distinctive policy, assumed the position of "a tariff for revenue, and incidentally protective."

Mr. Chairman, I can make great allowance for a Representative from the iron regions of Pennsylvania, or the manufacturing districts of New England, for being in favor of a high protective tariff. He may perhaps be representing the interests of his immediate constituents. But such is not the situation of my colleague and myself. We represent purely agricultural districts. It is of the very first importance for us to understand the operation of a high protective tariff upon the agricultural interest of our immediate constituents.

My colleague, I am aware, bases his advocacy

of a high protective tariff upon the oft-refuted argument, that such a tariff makes a home market for the agricultural products of Ohio.

This committee, I know, will pardon me for a few moments' digression, whilst I call my colleague's attention to the agricultural condition of Ohio at the present moment.

Our farmers have just finished gathering in their garner one of the most prolific harvests the country ever saw. It is supposed that Ohio will have twenty-five millions of bushels of surplus wheat this season. Now, what does my colleague propose to do with all this surplus wheat? Why, sir, we are told that it is to feed the manufacturers of New England! Let it be borne in mind that Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Indiana, with equally prolific harvests, are our competitors in the sale of all agricultural products, and will you still tell me, that the manufacturers of New England will consume even a moiety of our surplus produce?

Why, sir, supposing you should repeal the tariff act to-morrow, would there not be just as many mouths in New England to eat your wheat as there are to-day? Mr. Chairman, did you ever hear of a Yankee starving to death? Never, sir, never. The Yankees will live and eat, whether you have a tariff or not. Sir, I have, perhaps, the advantage of my colleague; I was raised in New England. I know something about the enterprise and economy of the New England people. Why, sir, a Yankee will live and make money, where an Ohioan would starve. You have, perhaps, heard the story illustrative of the Yankee character for making money. It is said that a Yankee father one day upon a rainy day locked his two sons into a room together, with nothing but a jack-knife each; and that they traded knives all day, and made fifty cents each before night. Mr. Chairman, the economy of the Yankee women is fully equal to the money-making propensity of the men. Why, sir, they will maintain a Yankee family, and live well too, upon what a family in Ohio would waste. They live cheaply, because they live economically. I do not by this wish to be understood as intimating that the Yankees live like the woman who advertised to keep a cheap boarding-house, and only charged her boarders twenty-five cents per week. When inquired of what she gave her boarders to eat, that she could afford such cheap boarding, she replied, "that she gave them dried apples for breakfast, warm water for dinner, and salt water for supper." In all seriousness, Mr. Chairman, I hazard the assertion that the difference in the consumption of New England, between a high protective tariff and a tariff for revenue, would not be equal to the surplus produce of the counties in which my colleague and myself reside.

Mr. Chairman, I hear a voice from the Whig side of this House asking me the question: "Do not the manufacturers of the country fix the price of our produce?" I answer most emphatically, no. I have, sir, for years been extensively engaged in produce operations, and during all these years have scarcely heard the inquiry made: "What will the manufacturers of New England pay for corn, or wheat, or pork?" No, sir, your produce operators watch with intense anxiety for the first lightning flash upon the telegraph wires, that shall give them the latest news from the Corn Exchange in London. The rise or fall of a single penny in London, is instantly felt in this country. The manufacturers of New England have no

ore to do in fixing the price of western produce, an you or I had to do in the downfall of Louis Philippe. As illustrative of this, let me call the attention of my colleague to the price of corn and wheat in Ohio, under the operation of the high protective tariff of 1828, and the corn laws of Great Britain. Wheat in his county and mine was sold at thirty cents per bushel, and corn was only worth from six to ten cents per bushel. But under the free-trade policy of Great Britain, and the tariff of 1846, our wheat has not been worth more than seventy cents, and our corn twenty-five cents per bushel. Mr. Chairman, it was such developments as these that made me declare, as I did the other day, "*that the Democratic party are opposed to a high protective tariff, and that in this position they have been sustained by the people.*"

My colleague next charges me with "having resuscitated the dead carcass of the Bank of the United States, and that after having dwelt upon its evil effects upon the country, I magnanimously thrust it through with a poisoned javelin." Not one word, Mr. Chairman, of all this is true. I incidentally mentioned the Bank of the United States, as one of the condemned measures of the Whig party. I said not one word about its effects, either good or bad, upon the country. My only allusion to it was in these words: "*I assume the position that the Democratic party took ground against a bank of the United States, and that in that position, they have been sustained by the people, until, in the language of Daniel Webster, 'a bank of the United States has become an OBSOLETE IDEA.' Will my colleague deny it?*" My colleague, sir, alludes to this matter, not for the purpose of condemning it, but for the purpose of attacking the reputation of General Jackson. Whenever the Bank of the United States is named, the rankling hatred of every Federalist towards the old Hero manifests itself. My colleague says, "that the war of the Democracy upon the Bank of the United States grew out of a quarrel between General Jackson and a bank President down east; and that had it not been for the refusal of this bank President to appoint certain directors in accordance with the request of General Jackson, we might have had a bank of the United States at this time." If it is true, sir, it only shows how an overruling providence directs the affairs of men to bring about great and beneficial results. It was, sir, the quarrel between Martin Luther and the Pope, about some Cardinal appointment, that we are indebted for the vast benefits of the Reformation. But, sir, why this allusion to the Bank of the United States? Do coming events cast their shadows before? And, if so, is this an inkling that the new Administration is for the resuscitation of the dead monster?

My colleague charges the Democracy with inconsistency, because the party opposes the distribution of the proceeds of the sales of the public lands among the States, and yet advocates the giving of these lands to actual settlers. I thank my colleague, Mr. Chairman, for making this charge, as it affords me another opportunity of vindicating the consistency of my party, and of illustrating the radical difference between the motive principles of my party and mine.

I have already said, that whilst Whiggery legislated for the benefit of the favored few, Democracy labored for the well-being of the masses. In the doctrine of my colleague relative to the public lands, we have a fair illustration. I took occasion

the other day to show how, by the Whig method of distribution, the proceeds of the sales of the public lands would reach the pockets of the tax payers of the country; to each one in proportion to his taxable wealth. Now, let me inquire, Mr. Chairman, is there anything like justice or equality in this? Is the millionaire entitled to any more benefit from our public lands than the laboring man? How have we acquired the vast Territories of California, New Mexico, and Utah? Have they been purchased by a tax upon the wealth of the country? If so, then there might be some show of justice in dividing the proceeds of the sales of these public lands among the wealthy men of the country, to each in proportion to his wealth. But not so, sir. These Territories have been acquired by the valor of our countrymen upon the battle field. Now, sir, who fights the battles of your country? Is it the rich and affluent? Do you see the capitalists of the country leaving the comforts and luxury of their homes to endure the toil, the bloodshed, and the deprivations of the tented field? A few such, perhaps, may be found among your officers; but the men who endure the toil, who stand the exposure, who bear the burdens of war, come from your workshops and farms, from among the laboring and toiling masses. These, sir, are the men who fight the battles of your country. These, sir, are the men that, by their blood and valor, have added so largely to your public domain. And to these men the Democracy propose ceding these lands.

But I may be told, sir, that we acquired these lands by purchase; that from the wealth of the country must be defrayed the expenses of this war, and the Mexican indemnity. All this, Mr. Chairman, may, in part, be true, and yet the justice and equity of the case remain unchanged. If the expenses of the war and the Mexican indemnity were raised by direct taxation, in which case each man would contribute in proportion to his wealth, then there would be some propriety in dividing the profits of these lands among the taxpayers in the same way. But not so, sir; the expense of the war and the Mexican indemnity are raised by a tariff, in which each man pays in proportion to his consumption of foreign goods. The poor man, therefore, with a large family, pays far more than the rich man with a small family. This would be especially true under the operation of the tariff of 1842, in which you taxed the coarser fabrics, such as enter into the consumption of the poor, far more in proportion to their value than you did the finer fabrics, such as are used by the more wealthy.

Sir, I have not time, in the brief hour allotted me under the rules of this House, to pursue this comparison further. I have already said enough to demonstrate the fact, that Whig policy is to protect the rich and well-born, while the Democratic policy is, in the language of General Jackson, to so legislate "that the blessings of our Government, like the dews of heaven, may descend alike upon the rich and the poor."

Thus, Mr. Chairman, might I continue to investigate, one by one, all my colleague's charges of inconsistency against the Democratic party, and they would be found to be the result of progress, instead of inconsistency. Why, sir, progress is the spirit of the age in which we live. It is written upon the commerce, upon the agriculture, and upon the mechanism of the country, as well as upon our principles of government. Witness your majestic

steamships, your magnetic telegraphs, your railroads; as well as the other thousand and one improvements of the age, and then tell me, that whilst all these vast improvements are taking place in the arts and sciences, shall we make no advances in man's political condition, lest, peradventure, we make ourselves obnoxious to the charge of inconsistency? Why, sir, three quarters of a century ago, man's capability of self-government was a doubtful problem. Our present glorious form of Government was an untried experiment. At the formation of our Constitution, there were men of pure patriotism and great intelligence, who doubted the propriety of trusting power in the hands of the people. But the Democratic platform of equality was adopted, and thus was laid the foundation of what is now acknowledged to be the model Government of the world. Yet, sir, if we contrast our present condition with what we were in the infancy of our Government, when all our political theories were untried experiments, we shall find that the spirit of progress has operated as beneficially and as brilliantly upon our political institutions, as it has upon the mechanism and the science of the country.

Why, Mr. Chairman, one century ago our Puritan fathers believed in witchcraft: and I should like to call my colleague's attention to their jurisprudence upon this subject. Learned judges directed, that when an old woman was accused of being a witch, she should be taken and cast into the nearest mill-pond; and if she sunk and was drowned, they pronounced her innocent; but if she floated upon the water, she was declared a witch, and doomed to be burned at the stake. But, sir, our jurisprudence is now changed; we no longer use the ordeal of either fire or water, in trying witches. My colleague would say, therefore, that we were inconsistent; but I should call it progress.

Again, Mr. Chairman, it was said that in early days our fathers used to go to mill with their corn in one end of the bag, and a stone in the other, to balance. But we have changed, and now the corn is made to balance itself, by putting a portion in each end of the bag. My colleague might call this very inconsistent; but I ascribe it all to the progressive spirit of the age.

But to be serious, Mr. Chairman: all my colleague's charges of inconsistency only establish the fact, that the Democratic party is the party of progress in this country. And to that party, and that party alone, are we indebted for our rapid advance in the science of self-government.

Mr. Chairman, I am a very charitable man, and yet indulge the hope that something good may come out of the Whig party. I am aware of their intense hatred of this Democratic progress. I am aware of their many devices to retard and prostrate our onward course. Neither is this the first time that I have heard the insane cry of inconsistency and change. But yet, sir, even the Federal party of this country is a progressive party. They are not now what they were in the days of Alexander Hamilton. They would not now advocate the election of a President and Senators for life. No, sir, they have progressed; they are every day becoming more and more Democratic. After the Democracy has tested, and established a principle, you will find the Federal party gradually adopting it. The difficulty is, that they are always about twenty years behind the Democracy, and by the time that, as a party, they have adopted

one of our theories, we have progressed, we have made some new advancement; and consequently are always at least twenty years ahead of them.

My colleague, Mr. Chairman, represents me as having said that the Democratic party opposed the annexation of Texas. In this, sir, he is utterly mistaken. If he will turn to the files of the *Globe*, he will find me reported as having said "*that the Democratic party of the North were in favor of the annexation of Texas.*" I then charged that if the Mexican war was the result of that annexation, that the responsibility of that war rested upon the Whig party. I then referred to the fact that the Mexicans were, by Whig speeches and Whig prophecies, led to believe that the whole Whig party of the country would take sides with them, in the event of a war. I then also referred to the fact that the Democratic party had passed an alternate resolution, leaving it optional with the President to negotiate upon the question of boundary, and thus avoid any and every possible cause for an open rupture with Mexico; and that this prudential measure was rendered utterly nugatory by the action of a Whig President, who upon the very last day of his administration, in hot haste, selected the positive annexation resolution, thus closing the door for negotiation against his successor.

Sir, the whole course of policy pursued by President Polk shows that he desired to settle all these difficulties by negotiation. Although by the action of his predecessor, in the selection of the resolution making the annexation positive and unconditional, the Mexican pride had been wounded and her minister had demanded his passport, and closed the door against negotiation, yet Mr. Polk, desirous of avoiding a rupture, through the intervention of our consul at Vera Cruz, had induced the Mexican President to receive a minister from us, clothed with full authority to settle all our difficulties. And no one can for a moment doubt but what his mission would have been successful, had not the administration of General Herrera, then President of Mexico, been overthrown. No one at all conversant with the history of the times will for a moment doubt but what the overthrow of Herrera, completely frustrated the amicable intentions of Mr. Polk, and was an estoppel to all negotiation between the two Republics. But, sir, what led to the overthrow of the administration of General Herrera? The answer is obvious: General Paredes seized upon the war spirit of Mexico—appealed to their national pride—pointed to the state of political parties in this country—demonstrated that the Whigs would oppose the Administration in all its war movements—that, as a consequence, the American people could not make any successful effort to sustain the Administration in the prosecution of a war, and that, sustained by the good-will of the Whig party of this country, it would be an easy matter to reconquer Texas.

I charged then, what I charge now, and what I just as conscientiously believe as I do that I have an existence, that it was the course of policy pursued by the Whig party, in order to break down a Democratic Administration, that compelled a war with Mexico. I referred to these facts for the purpose of refuting the charge of the honorable gentleman from Georgia, [Mr. STEPHENS,] and the honorable gentleman from Tennessee, [Mr. GENTRY,] that upon the Democratic party rested the responsibility of our present difficulties. I have

no fear, sir, but that the verdict of the American people, and the history of the times, will amply vindicate the Democratic party.

Mr. Chairman, the rapturous encomiums of my colleague this morning upon the honorable gentleman from Georgia, for his denunciations of the Democracy and the Mexican war, took me greatly by surprise. This war, sir, was either a just war or an unjust war. If it was just, then how could my colleague pass such encomiums upon those who denounced it, and did all in their power to thwart the Democracy in its prosecution? If it was unjust, how could my colleague have ever entertained an idea of engaging in its prosecution? Now, it so chanced, Mr. Chairman, that upon a certain occasion, I was upon a visit at the beautiful village in which my colleague resides. The county court was in session, and a vast concourse of people had gathered into the village. Sir, upon that occasion I saw marching up and down the streets of Hamilton, two little bands of patriots. They had thrown to the breeze our glorious stars and stripes, and with the soul-stirring music of the shrill fife and rattling drum, they were calling for volunteers to aid the Executive, in the prosecution of this Mexican war. And, sir, would you believe it? at the head of one of these gallant little companies I saw marching my patriotic colleague.

Mr. CAMPBELL. It was not for the purpose of prosecuting the war that I raised a company, but for the purpose of relieving General Taylor and his patriotic army at Point Isabel.

Mr. OLDS. No, Mr. Chairman, this subterfuge will not answer my colleague. He is mistaken in point of fact. The news of the glorious victories of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, which had entirely relieved General Taylor and his army from all danger, had reached us several days before this exhibition of my colleague's patriotism. The battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma were fought on the eighth and ninth of May; the news reached this city on the sixteenth of May, and three days afterwards was published in every village in Ohio. Now, sir, from certain facts connected with my visit at Hamilton, I am enabled to fix the date positively, on the twenty-third of May. Thus, sir, nearly a week had elapsed after my colleague had received the news of General Taylor's safety, before this attempt to raise a company to aid in the prosecution of the Mexican war.

Mr. CAMPBELL. A foreign enemy had invaded American soil; my object was to drive them back, not to aid in conquering their territory.

Mr. OLDS. My colleague is most unfortunate in his attempted excuses for that display of his patriotism. Why, sir, the Whigs have always told us that the country between the Nueces and the Rio Grande was Mexican soil, and that Jimmy Polk had marched his army into the Mexican country; but my colleague, in his attempted excuse, freely admits as true, what the Democracy always contended for, that the Mexican army had marched into the territory of the United States, and commenced the war by shedding American blood upon American soil.

But, Mr. Chairman, this is not all. Upon the occasion referred to, a public meeting was held in front of the Hamilton court-house. From the court-house steps the multitude was harangued by the war spirits of that community. One of the most eloquent of the many appeals made upon that occasion in favor of the war, was from my very

patriotic colleague. Not a word then escaped him about the injustice of the war. No, sir, it was "*indemnity for the past and security for the future.*"

Mr. CAMPBELL. My colleague is mistaken. I never said a word about "*indemnity for the past, or security for the future.*"

Mr. OLDS. I am not mistaken, Mr. Chairman. The remarks of my colleague upon that occasion were so much at variance with the general course of the Whig party, that they made an indelible impression upon my mind. Sir, I well remember the remarks of my colleague, from another reason. Colonel John B. Weller was at the head of the other company, and also addressed the assembled multitude. Colonel Weller and my colleague had been known as rival politicians, and upon that occasion, my colleague seemed as determined to take the wind out of Colonel Weller's sail. My colleague upon that occasion "*out-Heroded Herod.*"

Mr. CAMPBELL. Will my colleague vote for applying the Wilmot proviso to the Territory acquired from Mexico?

Mr. OLDS. "*Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*" When the proper occasion arises, I shall not shrink from my duty. It will be found, perhaps, that I shall make as few crooked marks upon the record as my colleague.

Mr. Chairman, when my colleague talks about consistency, I would like "*to refresh his pure mind by way of remembrance,*" by adverting for a few moments to the consistencies of the Whig party.

Who was it that in 1828 invoked war, famine, and pestilence, rather than the rule of a mere military chieftain?

Who then electioneered with coffin hand-bills, and so forcibly descanted upon the danger of taking from the camp a successful general, to discharge the presidential functions?

Why, sir, I have tried a thousand times to imagine the feelings of Henry Clay during the campaign of 1840 and 1848, when his devoted followers, forgetful of their "*war, famine, and pestilence*" feelings, shouted madly for the heroes of Tippecanoe and Buena Vista.

In 1828 the Whigs entreated the people, in the language of Henry Clay, "*by their love of country, by their love of liberty, for the sake of themselves and their posterity, in the name of their venerated ancestors, in the name of the human family, by all the past glory they had won, by all that awaited them as a nation if they were true and faithful, in gratitude to Him who had so signally blessed them in the past, to pause and contemplate the precipice which yawned before them, if they elevated a mere military chieftain to the presidential chair.*" All these patriotic appeals and forebodings of evil were forgotten in the nomination of General Harrison. And their party triumph with a military hero in 1840, and their inordinate thirst for office, no matter how obtained, emboldened them to select as their candidate in 1848, a man utterly unknown as a statesman and civilian; but red with the blood of many a hard-fought battle-field.

Thus, sir, the party that talked about consistency and principles, and that only twenty years since could invoke "*war, famine, and pestilence,*" rather than the rule of a mere military chieftain, have been the first in the history of this country to lay aside their eminent statesmen, and nominate, as the standard-bearer of their party, a man who never held a civil office in all his life,—a man distinguished only by the renown he had acquired in a

war which, as a party, they had denounced as "*unjust and damnable*."

Sir, I can imagine something of the feelings of Mr. Clay, when, after the election of General Taylor, he beheld a deputation of those war, famine, and pestilence men, hungry for office, repair to the barracks, to take "this human butcher,"—this "woman and child slayer"—this "man of blood"—this "executioner in infamous wars," surrounded with the implements of death, and the ensigns of war—with sword and pistols, with epaulets and chapeau de bras,—to conduct him to the presidential mansion. Sir, I fancy that I can see the indignation and disgust manifested by the Sage of Ashland, as he saw approach this military cortège. With uplifted hand, I fancy I hear him repeating his fervent prayer of 1828—"God of our fathers, if indeed we have incurred thy Divine displeasure, and if it be necessary to chastise us with the rod of vengeance, I humbly beseech thee, in mercy to visit our favored land with WAR, with PESTILENCE, with FAMINE, with any SCOURGE, other than the rule of this mere military chieftain." "If indeed we have incurred thy Divine displeasure, in mercy let loose upon us the dogs of war! let us see our villages sacked and burned—let us see the Indian scalping knife and tomahawk reeking with the blood and brains of our defenceless citizens—let us see our wives and daughters polluted upon our own hearth-stones by a brutual soldiery; but in infinite mercy turn away from us the rule of this military chieftain. If indeed we have incurred thy Divine displeasure, send upon us the wasting famine—let us see our wives and little ones famishing day by day—let us see their flesh wasting away for the want of food—let us hear their unceasing cry for bread—let us see them driven by the pangs of hunger to gnaw the flesh from their own bones; but in mercy turn away from us the rule of this military chieftain. If indeed we have incurred thy Divine displeasure, and it be necessary to chastise us with the rod of thy vengeance, send all over our land 'the PESTILENCE that walketh in darkness and wasteth at noonday.' Let us see our loved ones stricken down by the cholera; let us see the dead-cart moving from door to door, and without funeral rites, bearing by cart-loads, unceremoniously, our dead to a common grave; or if thy infinite mind can devise any other scourge more terrible than all these, in thy goodness and mercy send it upon us, but turn away from our heaven-favored land the rule of this mere military chieftain." Aye, Mr. Chairman, and as this cortège approaches nearer and still nearer, and as loud and still louder arises their shouts of "See the conquering hero comes!" I fancy I see and hear the venerable Sage of Ashland, with his locks, grown gray in the service of his party, all streaming in the wind, and with his arms, that so long have been bared in defence of Whig principles, thrown wildly about him, and with that voice that with soul-stirring eloquence has inspired his followers, and boldly set at defiance his enemies, now, in accents of despair, exclaiming, in the language of one of old, "Oh, God! my punishment is greater than I can bear."

Again, Mr. Chairman, who in 1828 were more loud than Whig politicians in deriding and condemning hickory brooms and hickory poles, as administering to the passions instead of appealing to the judgment and reason of the American people? Yet, who in 1840 more laborious and active than

these same politicians in building log-cabins—in guzzling hard cider—in nibbling corn dodgers—in wearing Buckeye beads? Why, sir, you would have scarcely supposed them "*the same old coon*." Who in 1840 denounced "proscription for opinion's sake," and inscribed upon their banners "PROSCRIPTION PROSCRIBED?" yet, when in power, within thirty days proscribed more men than had been turned out in four years of any previous Administration? Who most loudly denounced bestowing Executive appointments upon members of Congress? and who has just tendered four of the seven heads of departments to members of the Senate and House of Representatives? Who in 1840 denounced extravagance in the Government expenditures, and sent one Charley Ogle to pry about the President's house and prate about the hemming of his towels, and expose his bed utensils? and yet, as their first act when in power, vote six thousand dollars to refit and garnish this same presidential mansion for the reception of their log-cabin President?—who could prate about the head of one of the departments charging the Government with a patch upon his breeches, and yet defend their own Secretary of War in using his official influence as a Cabinet officer to Galphinize the Government out of one hundred and ninety thousand dollars?—who could denounce the Mexican war as unholy and damnable, brand General Taylor as a "*human butcher*," as a "*throat cutter*," as a "*slayer of women and children*," as a "*man of blood*," as "*an executioner in infamous wars*," and yet, for the sake of availability, select him as the standard bearer of their party. I trust, sir, that my colleague will call these things in remembrance when he next talks about Democratic consistency.

Mr. Chairman, in the nomination of General Taylor the Whig party, although abandoning all pretence to consistency, manifested more than their usual shrewdness. They had seen a powerful party in this country oppose the war of 1812; they had seen this same party meeting in Hartford Convention to concoct and devise measures to embarrass our Government in the prosecution of that war; they had seen citizens of our own country burning blue-lights along the shores of Connecticut, in order to light our enemy's man-of-war vessels into our ports and harbors; they had seen men then standing up in the Halls of Congress, and declaring that they would "*vote neither men nor money for the prosecution of that war, though the British cannon were battering down the very walls of our Capitol!*" Aye, sir, and in after years they had seen these Hartford Conventionists and blue-light Federalists marked men; they had seen the finger of scorn pointed at them; they had seen the children of these men taunted and derided as being the sons of Hartford Convention sires; then calling to mind their "*bloody hand and hospitable grave*" speeches in opposition to this Mexican war, which had terminated so gloriously for the country, they saw the doom that awaited them, unless by some strategy they could cover up their opposition to this war. Consequently, when in convention assembled, they discarded their eminent statesmen—such men as had devoted their best energies and periled all for the success of their party, and selected as their candidate a man whose reputation had been acquired in the prosecution of this war. And now, sir, if you ask one of these men if he opposed this war, and circulated "*bloody hand and hospitable grave*" speeches, he can turn upon you, and with well-feigned astonishment,

exclaim: "I oppose the Mexican war! I circulate 'bloody hand and hospitable grave' speeches! Why, sir, did I not support General Taylor for the Presidency? and was he not nominated because he had so successfully prosecuted this war? I did not support General Taylor because he had been identified with Whig principles, for he frankly avowed that he was a no-party man. He openly acknowledged that he did not understand the operations of a high protective tariff, and the other measures of policy of my party, having been all his life in the camp, and devoted to the duties of his profession. No, sir; whilst you and the Democracy opposed the election of General Taylor, I and my Whig brethren supported him, for the sole reason that he had so triumphantly conducted this glorious war!"

My colleague, Mr. Chairman, has not only assailed the Democratic party, with charges of inconsistency, but he has attempted to dishonor the party by attacking our distinguished standard-bearer in the late presidential contest. Sir, as a patriot, as a statesman, or as a gentleman, General Cass needs no defender upon this floor, or elsewhere. His biography is so interwoven with the history of the country, that daring indeed must be the man, who would attempt to assail him; but "*fools sometimes rush in where angels fear to tread.*"

But, sir, what is this charge of my colleague against General Cass? Why, that he dared not make known his sentiments on river and harbor improvements to the Chicago Convention.

I am aware, sir, that my colleague in this, is but repeating the slander of the universal Whig party in the campaign of 1848. Why, sir, you and I have seen them at their political gatherings, with great parade and pomposity, whilst descanting upon General Cass's political opinions, open their pocket-books, and after anxious search, take out a piece of satin, perhaps an inch square, with a few words printed upon it, which they called General Cass's Chicago letter, or Cass's constitutional opinion upon river and harbor improvements.

Mr. Chairman, I could make some allowance for Whig stump orators, for such an attempt to deceive their deluded followers; but the attempt of my colleague to play the same game of deception upon the honorable and intelligent gentlemen occupying seats in this House, speaks but poorly for his sagacity and judgment. Why, sir, there is not a gentleman within the sound of my voice, but what knows that General Cass in the Senate of the United States, over and again, recorded his votes in favor of bills making appropriations for river and harbor improvements. Sir, there is not a gentleman upon this floor but what knows that General Cass, in his letter accepting the Democratic nomination for the Presidency, referred to his votes as declarative of his opinion. But yet, because he did not choose to waste his time in attendance upon, or in writing lengthy constitutional arguments for a convention gotten up by a few designing politicians for political effect, he and the Democratic party are charged with a concealment of their opinions, with an attempt to deceive the people.

But, Mr. Chairman, who are these men that thus assail General Cass and the Democratic party? Who are these men that accuse us of concealing our opinions? Why, sir, the very men that in National Convention, both in 1840 and 1848, refused to make a declaration of opinions, openly avowing that they dare not go before the people with

their principles emblazoned upon their banners. The very men, sir, that in 1840 placed a padlock upon the mouth of their candidate for the Presidency, declaring "*that he should make no declaration of sentiments for the public eye.*" Why, sir, in 1840, to use a homely expression, you might as well attempt "to suck blood from a turnip," as to draw a declaration of opinion from a Whig stumper or a Whig candidate.

Mr. Chairman, though these comparisons of principles and consistency, called out by the charge of my colleague, may not be very flattering to the political honesty of the Whig party, yet they tell well for their political sagacity. Sir, with an open, manly avowal of their sentiments, they have always been defeated before the people. Twice, and twice only, in half a century, have they succeeded in electing a President by the people, and each time they have studiously avoided publishing a political creed. Twice, and twice only, since the days of the elder Adams, have they succeeded in the election of their candidate for the Presidency by the people, and each time they have passed by their eminent statesmen, whose opinions were known, and selected, as the candidate of the party, a man unknown to political fame, or at least unidentified with the political opinions and sentiments of the party. My colleague, Mr. Chairman, when he next addresses this committee, had better choose as his theme, "*Whig sagacity,*" and say as little as possible about Whig consistency or Whig honesty.

Mr. CAMPBELL. I will again interrupt my colleague, to inquire of him, if he will vote for the Wilmot proviso, and if he believes it constitutional? And I ask of him an explicit answer.

Mr. OLDS. My colleague perhaps thinks me like Gallileo, who, though he cared for neither God nor Devil, yet in order to avoid the continued importunity of the poor widow, granted her request. This, Mr. Chairman, is not the first occasion upon which my colleague has been vastly importunate upon the Wilmot proviso. It so chanced, sir, I believe, that he was a delegate to the Philadelphia convention which nominated Gen. Taylor. Now I believe, sir, that I do my colleague no injustice, when I say that, although in the early days of the Mexican war, he was exceedingly and ostentatiously patriotic, and anxious to enroll himself under the banner of the hero of Buena Vista, yet at the Philadelphia convention, he opposed his nomination; and, if I am not greatly mistaken, in that convention, after the nomination of General Taylor had been made, my colleague offered the Wilmot proviso for the purpose of pledging Gen. Taylor to its support. He told the Whigs plainly upon that occasion, that the nomination of General Taylor would be very unpalatable in Ohio, and that unless the convention adopted the proviso, Ohio would be lost to the Whigs. His Whig friends upon that occasion treated his importunity more rudely than I have; for their only reply to him was, "*Damn Ohio, she is an abolition State anyhow.*"

Mr. CAMPBELL. I told them that I would go home, take off my coat, and roll up my sleeves, and go to work to defeat General Taylor.

Mr. OLDS. Certainly, Mr. Chairman; and I believe my colleague was as good as his word. Whether it was pure patriotism or not that induced him to take this course, I am wholly unable to say; but one thing I do know—I know that about this time he became a candidate for Congress; I

know that in his district, there are several hundred Quaker votes, and everybody knows that these Quakers are opposed to war and military chieftains, and in favor of the "proviso."

Mr. Chairman, my colleague has not adverted to one very important point in my former remarks. In his labored efforts to fix inconsistency upon the Democratic party, he has entirely overlooked the deceptions which I charged upon the Whigs. I charged then, and I charge now, that the nomination of General Taylor was a deception upon the people, and his election a fraud upon the elective franchise, and that as a result of that deception and fraud, we have all our present difficulties. Sir, if the Whig party had been but half as importunate to commit General Taylor, or even to ascertain his views upon the proviso, as my colleague is to commit me; and if General Taylor had pursued the open, manly course of General Cass, and declared his sentiments, his election would have been a decision of the people upon this dangerous and exciting question. But no; the game of deception was commenced by the convention which nominated him. The importunity of my colleague, which, from the demonstrations of this morning, this committee will understand is not easily resisted, utterly failed, in forcing that convention to show its hand; and during the entire campaign, the friends of General Taylor at the South claimed him as a pro-slavery man. They appealed to his geographical position—his large interest in slaves—to his feelings and prejudices and his attachment to the cherished institution of the South, in support of their assertions. At the same time, in the North, the friends of General Taylor claimed him as a Wilmot-proviso man. They referred to his "Signal letter;" and his peculiar friends read to the deluded people extracts from what they claimed as private letters from General Taylor, saying that if elected President he should not veto the "proviso."

During the entire campaign, General Taylor must have been aware, that his friends were cheating either the North or the South. A manly, open avowal of his sentiments, would at once have stopped this game of deception, and have left him in a position to act in accordance with the verdict of the people, which by his election would have been pronounced in favor of the position by him assumed. By a fraud upon either the North or the South, he had secured his election; and by a continuance of this fraud, by so shaping his administration as that his friends at both the North and the South might still hope, that ultimately he would assume their own peculiar position, has he driven the American people upon the very brink of a dissolution of the Union.

Mr. CAMPBELL. I must interrupt my colleague once more to inquire whether he intends to vote for the Wilmot proviso?

Mr. OLDS. I have already said that by no vote of mine, should slavery be extended into territory now free. In the campaign of 1848, I everywhere advocated the doctrine of "non-intervention." It was the platform adopted by of the National Democratic Convention. I then said and believed, what

time has demonstrated to be true, that by "non-intervention, slavery could never go into the Territories." So well convinced are the South of the truth of this position, that they have repudiated "non-intervention." In the campaign of 1848, the Whigs charged me with being a pro-slavery man for advocating the doctrine of "non-intervention." Now the South denounce Gen. Cass and the northern Democracy as Abolitionists for sustaining the same position. Mr. Chairman, my mind remains unchanged; I still believe that the doctrine of "non-intervention" is the most effectual estoppel to the extension of slavery. But by the defeat of Gen. Cass, the people have decided that there shall be "intervention." I am ready for the issue. I came here pledged to oppose the extension of slavery into territory now free. I shall, regardless of all consequences personal to myself, redeem that pledge. Immediately after the organization of this House, I voted against laying Root's resolution upon the table. Does, my colleague regard that as equivalent to voting for the proviso?

Mr. CAMPBELL. Certainly I do, but I wish to know if my colleague will now vote for the proviso?

Mr. OLDS. My colleague shall be gratified. You have now, Mr. Chairman, upon the Speaker's table, bills from the Senate organizing territorial governments for Utah and New Mexico. When these bills come up for consideration, and amendments are proposed, excluding slavery or involuntary servitude from these Territories, except for crime, such amendments shall have my vote.

* Mr. CAMPBELL. Does my colleague believe the "proviso" to be constitutional?

Mr. OLDS. Mr. Chairman, I have taken an oath to support the Constitution of the United States. All the powers of earth and hell cannot compel me to violate that oath. Does my colleague judge me by himself, that he supposes I could vote for the proviso, believing it to be unconstitutional? Sir, the question is damning to his own purity of motive, and impertinent to me. I detest his motive, and scorn his imputation.

I trust, Mr. Chairman, that I have said enough to vindicate the consistency of the Democratic party. Its history, whether in peace or in war, is the history of the country. Its impress is written upon every page of its legislation. The high reputation we now enjoy among the nations of the earth; the general prosperity that now distinguishes us as a people, are all to be ascribed to the supremacy of Democratic principles. In a word, sir, the triumph of Democracy has been the triumph of the country. Believing these things to be true, I beseech the Democracy of this House, in remembrance of the past, and their hopes and expectations for the future, to lay aside their sectional feelings; to bury deep in oblivion their sectional prejudices, and to bring together their common energies; and, with a united effort, close again Pandora's Box, opened by the election of General Taylor; and turn back the mighty tide of disunion now deluging the country.